

Washington, DC -- Today, Congresswoman Linda Sánchez made a statement at the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Claims Oversight Hearing on "The Issuance, Acceptance, and Reliability of Consular Identification Cards." Sánchez is a member of the subcommittee and the only Latino on the Judiciary Committee.

Below is her statement:

Thank you, Chairman Hostettler and Ranking Member Jackson-Lee for holding this important hearing. And I want to thank the witnesses, too, for coming here today to share their insights into Consular Identification Cards.

In recent months, concerns have been raised about the use of Consular Identification Cards. It is interesting to me that these concerns are surfacing now, since such cards have been used for many years. Mexico, for example, has issued Consular Identification Cards since 1871. In fact, consular registration of Mexican nationals assists Mexican consulates in complying with the functions recognized by the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. In addition, as a sovereign nation, Mexico is entitled to issue such identification cards to its foreign nationals. This was made clear by recent statements made by Asa Hutchinson, the Undersecretary of Border and Transportation Security.

Consular Identification Cards are accepted by banks, financial institutions, and police officers in order to prove the bearer's identity. At least 80 banks, over 100 cities, and hundreds of police departments accept the Mexican Consular ID. In fact, the Consular Identification Card is more fraud-proof than any passport or U.S.-government issued ID.

Contrary to what has been said, these Cards do not "legalize" the status of any immigrant, and they cannot be used to obtain any immigration or citizenship benefit, including work authorization or the right to vote. Mexican consulates explain this to every applicant.

Despite these facts, some Members of Congress have begun arguing that these cards should not be accepted in the United States. This approach, if taken, may be more than just unnecessary—it could be detrimental to U.S. interests and national security.

As a party to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, the United States is under an obligation to comply with the non-discrimination provisions of that convention. Those provisions call for parity and reciprocity among parties to the Convention. The Convention specifies that better or worse treatment will not be considered discriminatory, as long as the same favorable or restrictive treatment is also applied to U.S. citizens in the "sending State". In other words, whatever treatment we give Mexican consuls, the same treatment will be applied to U.S. Consuls in Mexico. So if we use high barriers to Mexican nationals who want to live, do business in, or travel to the U.S., then we can expect that those same high barriers will be used against U.S. citizens in Mexico. This kind of practice unnecessarily creates difficulties for U.S. citizens and businesses.

At the same time, I recognize that there are concerns related to the use of Consular Ids. Some people worry that these cards are not, in fact, sufficiently fraud-proof. Others worry that

accepting these cards will make life easier and more enticing for immigrants who come here illegally. And a third concern is that accepting these cards from Mexico now will set a precedent we may not want to continue when other, less friendly nations try to use similar cards.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses, and am hopeful that all of us will come to agree on the value of Consular Identification Cards and the foolishness of banning their use in this country. Thank you.